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Attention to self and speech fluency

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of attention to self on physiological arousal and speech fluency in typical speakers. Past research has provided evidence of social influences on behavioural performance (Krauss, 2002). However, social influences on speech fluency are still unclear. One possibility is that social anxiety about the self increases physiological arousal, which can in turn impacts speech fluency. Another possibility is that social anxiety about the self impacts both physiological arousal and speech fluency. Although a few studies have also investigated the link between physiological arousal and stuttered speech (e.g., Weber & Smith, 1990), the relations among social anxiety, physiological arousal, and speech fluency remain unclear. Participants are currently being run according to the following design. College age students are presented three tasks over a computer monitor. These include 1) a baseline task consisting of movie clip, 2) a cognitively demanding Stroop-like task, and 3) a narrative task in which a story is created. These three tasks are presented in counterbalanced order across two conditions. In one condition, participants see a video presentation of themselves on an adjacent monitor to increase attention to self. In the other condition, this video presentation is not available for them to see. Skin conductance and heart rate are acquired for measures of respiratory sinus arrhythmia (RSA) and skin conductance responses (SCR). RSA is a measure of parasympathetic influence on the heart that decreases when a person faces a challenge, whereas SCR is a measure of sympathetic arousal (Porges, 2007) that increases when a person meets a challenge. Finally, narratives are transcribed and disfluent events are coded. Analysis of 11 participants shows, contrary to expectations, that RSA is greater when telling the story compared to watching the movie. Data collection and analysis will continue.

Keywords: Self; Fluency; Arousal; Attention

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